

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1668

INFO AMCONSUL NAPLES

AMCONSUL MILAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 19986

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY OFFICIAL

SUMMARY. DURING A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, AN ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) OFFICIAL STATED THAT THE USEFUL LIFE OF THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT HAS NOT COME TO AN END. HE EXPRESSED MILD DISSATISFACTION OVER SOME OF THE RECENT TACTICS OF HIS PARTY AND CONFIRMED THAT THERE ARE SOME DIVERGENT VIEWPOINTS AMONG THE LEADERSHIP AND THAT THE PARTY IS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES WITH SEGMENTS OF ITS BASE WHICH HAVE TRADITIONALLY SUPPORTED IT. SUBJECT FELT THAT CUTTING THE COST OF LABOR IN ITALY, WHICH SHOULD NECESSARILY INVOLVE REVISING THE SCALA MOBILE, IS ONE OF THE KEYS TO GETTING THE ECONOMY MOVING AGAIN. HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT THE UNIONS, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, WOULD PROVE FLEXIBLE ON THIS MATTER, ALTHOUGH HE CONCEDED THAT CGIL SECRETARY LAMA HOLDS VIEWS WHICH ARE DIVERGENT FROM THOSE OF THE PCI. THE OFFICIAL SAID THAT, AS ITS NEXT MOVE TOWARDS A DIRECT SHARE IN THE GOVERNING OF THE COUNTRY, THE PCI HOPED TO MOVE INTO THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY, ALTHOUGH THIS WOULD NOT INITIALLY INVOLVE ACTUAL PARTICIPATION IN AN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. HE EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE NATION'S POLITICAL FORCES SINCE THEY ARE OF A HAPHAZARD NATURE. THE SOURCE WAS HOPEFUL THAT THE ASSUMPTION OF POWER OF THE NEW CARTER ADMINISTRATION WOULD OPEN A NEW ERA IN US-PCI RELATIONS, AND SUGGESTED THAT THE US

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PUT THE PARTY TO INCREASINGLY MORE DIFFICULT TESTS OF ITS POL-

ITICAL COMMITMENTS AND ASSERTIONS. EMBOFF RETORTED THAT THE PCI DID NOT SEEM TO PASS MINIMAL TESTS THAT COULD BE APPLIED TO ITS ACTIONS TODAY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT. IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBOFF, A RESPONSIBLE PCI OFFICIAL STATED THAT THE USEFUL LIFE OF THE CURRENT ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT HAS NOT COME TO AN END. ACCORDINGLY, THE PCI DOES NOT INTEND, IN THE SHORT TERM, TO TAKE ANY ACTIONS WHICH WOULD BRING THE GOVERNMENT DOWN. OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, FROM THE PCI VIEWPOINT, THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT REPRESENTS A TRANSITIONAL STAGE IN THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL EVOLUTION, AND THEREFORE SHOULD HAVE ONLY A LIMITED LIFE. SOURCE SPECULATED THAT THE NEXT POLITICAL CRISIS COULD COME IN THE SPRING, AT THE TIME WHEN THE FULL WEIGHT OF THE CURRENT AUSTERITY MEASURES WOULD MAKE THEMSELVES FELT. THE PCI OFFICIAL INDICATED GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH ANDREOTTI'S PERFORMANCE AT THE HELM OF THE GOVERNMENT, AND CONCEDED THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF AN ALTERNATIVE, THE STRENGTH OF THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT IS GREATER THAN ITS DIRECT PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT WOULD INDICATE.

2. THE PCI. OUR SOURCE, REPEATING WHAT WE HAVE HEARD DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY PREVIOUSLY, SAID THE PCI IS FACING GREATER PROBLEMS NOW THAN IN MANY YEARS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE SPEECHES OF PARTY PRESIDENT LUIGI LONGO AND DIRECTORATE MEMBER GIORGIO AMENDOLA AT THE RECENT CENTRAL COMMITTEE (CC) MEETING REPRESENTED DIVERGENT VIEWPOINTS WITHIN THE PCI OVER HOW TO PROCEED AT THE PRESENT TIME. THE FACT THAT PARTY SECRETARY BERLINGUER'S FINAL REPORT TO THE CC FAILED TO DRAW FROM EITHER OF THESE TWO SPEECHES REFLECTS, HE ADDED, THE DEPTH OF THE DIFFERENCES, ALTHOUGH HE SUGGESTED THAT THE POSITIONS OF LONGO AND AMENDOLA ARE NOT AS FAR APART AS IT WOULD APPEAR. (AMENDOLA SAYS MOVE AHEAD TOWARDS A ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT AT ALL COSTS WHILE LONGO SAYS EITHER MOVE AHEAD RAPIDLY OR SHIFT TACTICS AND RETURN TO THE OPPOSITION.) OUR SOURCE FELT THAT BERLINGUER'S LETTER TO THE PARTY SECRETARIES AND TO THE PRIME MINISTER HAD BEEN A MISTAKE BECAUSE, AS IT EVENTUALLY TURNED OUT, THE PCI HAD BEEN OBLIGED TO RETURN TO THE PARLIAMENT AND ABSTAIN ON A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FOR THE GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT THE IDEA FOR THE LETTER HAD ORIGINATED IN A GROUP CLOSE CONFIDENTIAL

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TO BERLINGUER, AND THAT THE SECRETARY HAD SENT IT ON ONLY AFTER MAKING SOME WORDING CHANGES WHICH SUBSTANTIALLY MODIFIED IT.

3. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, THE PCI OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE PARTY IS NOT EXPERIENCING MAJOR DIFFICULTIES WITHIN ITS OWN RANKS. HE PERSONALLY HAD FOUND THAT WHEN SPEAKING TO PARTY MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS THEY GENERALLY COMPREHENDED THE REASONS

FOR THE LEADERSHIP'S CURRENT LINE. HOWEVER, THE DIFFICULTIES BECOME APPARENT WHEN MEETING WITH INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS WHO SUPPORT THE PCI FROM OUTSIDE ITS RANKS, I.E. TRADE UNION MEMBERS. HERE THE PCI HAS FOUND A GENERALLY WIDESPREAD LACK OF UNDERSTANDING FOR ITS POLICIES WHICH HAS OBLIGED IT TO EMBARK ON A MAJOR EDUCATIONAL EFFORT. OUR SOURCE WAS CONFIDENT THAT WITH HARD WORK THE PARTY COULD OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES IT IS EXPERIENCING WITH A NUMBER OF ITS SUPPORTERS.

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4. THE ECONOMY. SPEAKING ABOUT THE ECONOMY, THE COMMUNIST OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE CRUX OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS IS CUTTING THE COST OF LABOR, I.E. REVISING THE WAGE INDEXATION SCHEME. THE PARTY HAS FOUND THE CGIL (COMMUNIST DOMINATED TRADE UNION) INTRANSIGENT IN DISCUSSIONS HELD THUS FAR ON THIS ISSUE. (THE NIGHT PRIOR TO THE CONVERSATION BEING REPORTED, OUR SOURCE SAID HE AND OTHERS HAD TALKED WITH CGIL SECRETARY LAMA FOR FIVE HOURS WITHOUT SUCCEEDING IN OBTAINING ANY GIVE ON THE ISSUE.) SOURCE SAID THAT THE ISSUE IS COMPLICATED BY THE SOCIALIST POSITION, ESPECIALLY AS REFLECTED IN THE ACTIONS OF UIL (SOCIALIST DOMINATED UNION) WHICH INCREASINGLY SEEKS TO FLANK THE COMMUNISTS ON THE LEFT IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND BY CONFINDUSTRIA'S FAILURE TO SEEK ANY UNION CONCESSIONS ON THE SCALA MOBILE (SEEKING INSTEAD TO CONFRONT THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS BY A GOVERNMENT "FISCALIZATION" PROGRAM) WHICH REDUCES THE INCENTIVE FOR THE UNIONS TO NEGOTIATE ON THIS ISSUE. ALTHOUGH THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PCI AND CGIL ARE GREATER THAN AT ANY TIME IN RECENT YEARS, SOURCE SAID HE

WAS MILDLY OPTIMISTIC THAT LAMA WOULD EVENTUALLY MOVE CLOSER TO THE PARTY'S THINKING ON ECONOMIC ISSUES.

5. THE NEXT STAGE. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, BERLINGUER AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT HIM, ARE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO CAUTION ABOUT THE NEED FOR PATIENCE IN ACHIEVING THE PARTY'S LONG-TERM POLITICAL OBJECTIONS. THIS HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT; YET A FALSE MOVE COULD PROVOKE AN UNFORTUNATE REACTION.
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TION A LA CHILE. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE PARTY LEADERSHIP MUST CONTINUE TO SHOW STEADY, EVEN IF GRADUAL, PROGRESS TOWARDS ATTAINING A ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT. AS ITS NEXT OBJECTIVE, THE PCI WOULD LIKE TO ENTER THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY ON THE BASIS OF A JOINTLY ESTABLISHED PROGRAM. THIS STEP WOULD NOT INVOLVE FORMAL PCI ENTRY INTO A GOVERNMENT (WHICH WOULD BE THE NEXT GOAL) AND, ACCORDING TO THE PARTY'S TIME SCHEDULE, SHOULD HAPPEN IN THE SPRING.

6. POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS. THE PCI OFFICIAL STATED THAT THERE IS NO ESTABLISHED LINE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PCI. THERE HAD BEEN SOME CONTACTS BETWEEN ANDREOTTI'S CONFIDENT ON. EVANGELISTI AND PCI HEADQUARTERS, BUT THE PCI SUGGESTED THAT THEY NOT CONTINUE SINCE THE LEADERS WERE NEVER SURE WHETHER EVANGELISTI SPOKE FOR HIMSELF OR ON BEHALF OF ANDREOTTI. FOR THE MOMENT, MOST CONSULTATIONS OCCUR IN THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONS WHERE THE PCI HAS CHARGED ONE OF ITS MEMBERS ON EACH TO SERVE AS THE FORMAL CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTY. ADDITIONALLY, THERE ARE OCCASIONAL CONTACTS BETWEEN PCI EXPERTS AND VARIOUS MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS. HOWEVER, THE PCI FINDS THE CURRENT SYSTEM EXCEEDINGLY HAPHAZARD AND MUCH TOO INFORMAL. IT FEELS THAT THE LACK OF DIRECT CHANNELS HAS ALREADY LED ANDREOTTI TO SOME TACTICAL MISTAKES SINCE HE FAILED TO ACHIEVE AN ACCURATE READ-OUT OF THE POLICIES OF THE PCI AND OF THE OTHER PARTIES AND INTEREST GROUPS.

9. THE PCI AND THE US. SOURCE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE ELECTORAL VICTORY OF GOVERNOR CARTER WOULD SIGNIFY A NEW ERA IN PCI-US RELATIONS. SPECIFICALLY, HE TALKED POSITIVELY OF THE IDEA OF A DIALOGUE IN WHICH THE US WOULD BE ABLE TO TEST THE SINCERITY OF PCI COMMITMENTS. EMBOFF CAUTIONED THE PCI OFFICIAL NOT TO READ TOO MUCH INTO SOME OF THE AMERICAN ELECTORAL RHETORIC, AND SUGGESTED THAT A TEST OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY TOWARDS THE PCI PROBABLY SHOULD NOT BE MADE AT AN EARLY DATE. FURTHERMORE, HE ADDED THAT JUDGING FROM PCI ACTIONS AND THE DAILY L'UNITA OUTPUT, HE FELT THAT THE PARTY COULD NOT SATISFACTORILY PASS MINIMAL TESTS OF ITS COMMITMENTS THAT COULD BE MADE AT THE PRESENT TIME. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, THE OFFICIAL INDICATED THAT THERE IS NOTHING

TO A PUBLISHED REPORT IN THE ITALIAN PRESS THAT PCI LEADER
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GIORGIO NAPOLITANO IS PLANNING TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES
IN FEBRUARY.

10. THE SOVIET VACATION SCENE. SOURCE SAID THAT HE HAD SPENT
HIS SUMMER VACATION AT A SPA IN THE USSR. OTHER PCI LEADERS
IN THE USSR AT THE SAME TIME HE SAID WERE COSSUTA (A TOUR OF
SIBERIA) AND PECCHIOLI (MOUNTAIN CLIMBING IN ARMENIA). ALL
THREE SPENT A DAY OR SO IN MOSCOW PRIOR TO THEIR RETURN TO
ITALY. WHILE THERE THEY MET WITH ZAGLADIN OF THE SOVIET
PARTY'S INTERNATIONAL SECTION. WHILE NOTHING OF SUBSTANCE
CAME FROM THE TALKS, THE ITALIANS FELT THAT ZAGLADIN'S ATTITUDE
WAS FRIENDLIER ON HIS HOME TURF THAN WHEN HE MET SOME
MONTHS BACK WITH PCI OFFICIALS IN ITALY. BEAUDRY

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